

PHARMACEUTICAL TAKE-BACK

A DOSAGE FOR CHANGE



LA County Overview



A MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER

Prescription and non-prescription drugs play a critical role in treating diseases and saving lives. However, unused and expired medications must be properly discarded so that they do not pose a risk to others.

According to the National Community Pharmacists Association, an estimated 200 million pounds of unused or expired prescription drugs are stored in medicine cabinets across America. This situation provides easy access and an opportunity for the abuse of these medications by others for whom they were not intended.

In LA County from 2000 to 2009, there were 8,265 drug-related deaths. Public health statistics show that 61 percent of those deaths involved a commonly abused prescription or over-the-counter drug. Of note, nearly 75 percent of residents who misuse prescription drugs obtain them from relatives or friends. Deaths and illnesses caused by the abuse of prescription opioids are of national concern. The number of deaths each year from prescription opioids is now greater than the deaths from heroin, cocaine, and benzodiazepine drugs combined.

It is also very important that needles, syringes, lancets, and other medical products are disposed of properly. While the use and disposal of these items is closely regulated in healthcare facilities, there is no regulatory oversight of their use in the home. Studies show that these items are routinely placed into the trash. Improper disposal practices may result in needlestick and other injuries that can expose others to bloodborne illnesses such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. Many residents are unsure of safe disposal methods, and proper disposal services are limited.

These situations represent a significant public health problem. There is an opportunity for LA County to implement additional disposal options that will protect the health and safety of our residents. The Board of Supervisors recently passed a motion directing the Pharmaceutical Working Group, made up of several County departments, to draft an Extended Producer Responsibility ordinance. In the proposed ordinance, manufacturers and producers would develop and fund convenient collection services for LA County residents.

The principle behind the ordinance is to protect public health and assure public safety. Safe drug and sharps disposal is an important social need that requires a permanent and sustainable solution. The Pharmaceutical Working Group is reaching out to the producers of drugs, needles, syringes and other medical products as well as stakeholders in the community to gather suggestions and concerns about drafting such an ordinance. After this information has been collected, the group will draft an ordinance, share this for further comment, and then provide this to the Board of Supervisors for its consideration.

Problem

MEDICATION MISUSE

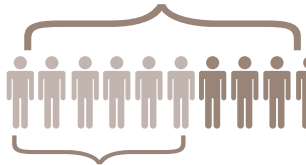
Prescription drug abuse has become one of the fastest-growing public health concerns in the United States and Los Angeles County. Nearly 75 percent of residents who use prescription drugs inappropriately, obtain them from relatives or friends.

According to the CDC, there is a national epidemic of prescription opioid abuse that takes about 15,000 lives each year in the U.S. Deaths from prescription opioids are greater than deaths from heroin, cocaine, and benzodiazepine drugs combined each year.

Public Health statistics in LA County show that there were 8,265 drug-related deaths in Los Angeles County between 2000-2009; 61 percent of those deaths involved commonly abused prescription or over-the-counter drugs.



8,265 Drug related deaths
in 2000-2009



61% Involved commonly
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over-the-counter drugs.

SHARPS WASTE

Disposal of needles, syringes, lancets, and other medical products are not regulated in the home, while these same products used in health care facilities are strictly regulated. Home-generated medical waste is routinely placed into the trash, which poses a public health risk.

"Given the limited waste disposal services available and the fact that many County residents are unsure of how to safely and properly dispose of pharmaceutical and sharps waste, there is an opportunity for Los Angeles County to take action to provide additional waste disposal options through this ordinance," said Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer for Los Angeles County. "It is prudent to encourage other methods of disposal."

Sustained collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential.

How to Manage Your Medications

It's important to properly store medications (pharmaceuticals) that are currently being used and to safely dispose of unused/expired medication.

What is considered medication?

- Prescription drugs
- Over-the-counter medications
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, etc.
- Birth control pills
- Hormone replacement drugs

AVOID Flushing
Unwanted
Medications



How to properly dispose of medications

Do not flush unused, unwanted, and expired medications down the toilet or put them in the drains. Always make sure to keep medication out of reach of children and pets. Unused, unwanted, and expired medications can be taken to one of the County's free Household Hazardous Waste collection events, designated Sheriff's stations or to one of the City of Los Angeles' SAFE Centers. Event schedule and locations can be found on the CleanLA.com website.

When disposing of medication, make sure to remove all labels with personal information and recycle the containers at home. Place unneeded pills into a plastic container or bag.

MEDICATION COLLECTION OPTIONS

A

Mail Program



B

Disposal Bins



Hospital



Pharmacies



Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

EPR is an environmental protection policy approach that recognizes a manufacturer or producer's responsibility to steward a product through the post-consumer stage of a product's lifecycle.

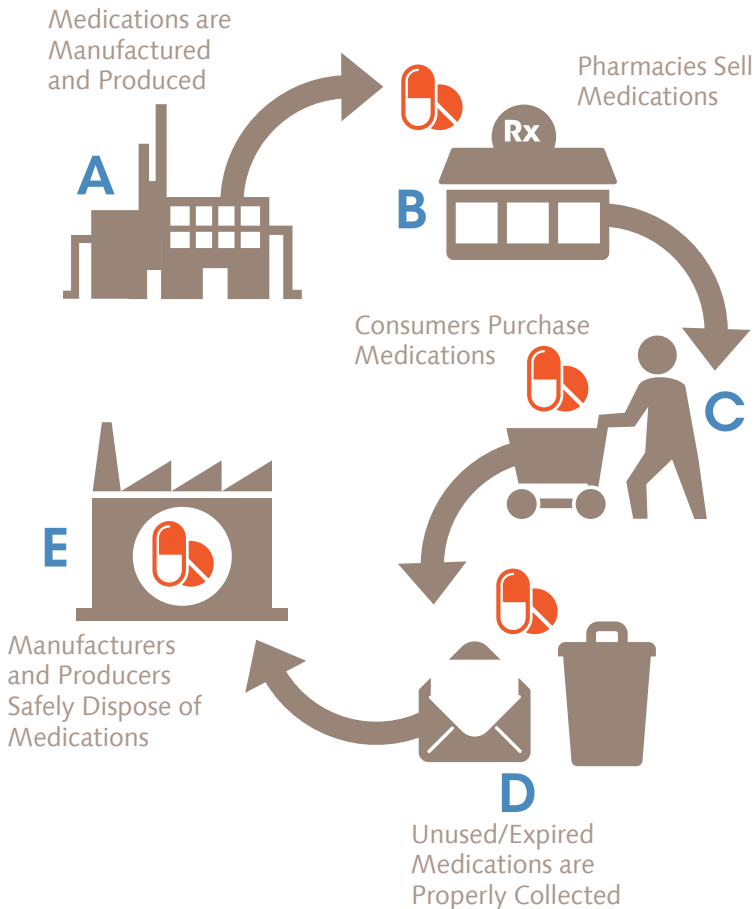
- EPR provides producers an *incentive to design* their products to be less hazardous and/or *easier to manage/recycle* at the end of their useful life.

- The EPR approach has been *successful* in managing pharmaceutical (unused/expired medication) waste for years throughout some European countries, Mexico, and Canada.

Sustainable Solution

Take-back programs are a *convenient*, efficient, and environmentally safe collection and disposal option for pharmaceutical and sharps waste.

- A take-back program financed by the pharmaceutical industry would manage the safe collection and disposal of unused/expired pharmaceuticals and relieve the current burden from publically funded efforts.



Creating a **Healthier** LA County



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